C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000008

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TAGS: IV PGOV
SUBJECT: PM BANNY: POLITICAL GRIDLOCK

REF: ABIDJAN 1317

Classified By: AMBASSADOR AUBREY HOOKS FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D.

¶1. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on January 3, Prime
Minister Banny stated that Cote d'Ivoire is basically in
political gridlock. All the political actors are waiting to
see what will happen next. He characterized President
Gbagbo's five proposals for dealing with the crisis as
non-proposals and unrealistic. He noted that what President
Gbagbo did not say was more important than what he did say,
and President Gbagbo had said nothing about the
identification process or the role of the Prime Minister in
carrying out the proposals. He added that credible elections
were not possible without a credible identification process
to repair the gaps that occurred in the electoral process in
¶2000. PM Banny also noted that Forces Nouvelles leader
Soro's caveated response (yes to dialog, but within the
framework of UN Resolution 1721) to President Gbagbo's call
for a direct dialog with the Forces Nouvelles was a clever
response that said little, especially since President Gbagbo
and Soro have long maintained direct contact with each other.

¶2. (C) The PM asked his advisor Leon Koffi to read to the
Ambassador a letter which Forces Nouvelles Chief of Staff
General Bakayoko sent to General Ouassenan Kone, head of the
national DDR committee, announcing that the Forces Nouvelles
were suspending their participation in talks with the FANCI
Defense Forces as of January 2 and effective until further
notice. The PM commented that this came as a surprise to him
and he did not know what had provoked the Forces Nouvelles to
make such a decision. The Ambassador pointed out that the
identification process and the DDR/military restructuring
process were supposed to occur concomitantly, and the
decision of the Forces Nouvelles to suspend their
participation in military talks could serve as a convenient
pretext for the President's camp to block further progress on
the identification process. The PM acknowledged that that
was true. However, the PM said he planned to act as if he
were deaf and blind, ignoring the political rhetoric, in an
effort to implement the program which all political actors
had already accepted; it is their program that he is trying
to carry out. The PM informed the Ambassador that President
Gbagbo was scheduled to sign a decree nominating magistrates
who would serve on the mobile identification teams (audiences
foraines) at the time that the PM and the Ambassador were
meeting. The Prime Minister conceded, however, that the
political impasse could easily block his best efforts to
maintain some momentum.

¶3. (C) The Prime Minister commented that President Gbagbo,
during his December 19 speech announcing his five proposals,
made an oblique reference to the formation of a new
government. The PM said that such a step would take
President Gbagbo and all the political actors outside of UN
Resolution 1721. The PM said he was not afraid of such a
prospect. He commented candidly that doing so might even
have a salutary effect given that the country is currently in
gridlock. He noted that a drastic step may be necessary to

break the current mindset.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Cote d'Ivoire is currently experiencing a
political harmattan, where visibility is reduced to
practically zero. Everyone, including the Prime Minister, is
waiting for the air to clear to regain their bearings. The
decision of the Forces Nouvelles to suspend their
participation in military talks blows more sand into the air
and will contribute to blocking the political process. The
PM's comment about breaking the current mindset may indicate
that he is coming to the conclusion that his efforts are
going no where and that a solution to the political equation
depends on the addition of a new (undefined) variable.
Hooks